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A Solid Front Against FCC

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WASHINGTON.

The broadcasting industry has reacted with unusual speed to the Federal Communications Commission's scheme for breaking up the television networks' near-monopoly of ownership rights in prime-time programming.

The FCC itself in a way expedited the opposition by announcing its proposed "50-50 rule" on Monday, the very day the National Association of Broadcasters was convening its 43d annual convention here.

Possibly nettled a little by a trade-paper story that the industry organization was unlikely to put in its oar immediately because of unwieldy procedural considerations, the NAB leadership yesterday afternoon rammed through a resolution in "firm opposition" to the FCC proposal.

A few hours earlier, the CBS-TV affiliates advisory board headed by Carl Lee, of WKZO-TV, Kalamazoo, Mich., issued a similar resolution declaring the commission's plan "would severely impair television broadcasting's capacity to operate in the public interest."

Stations allied to the ABC and NBC television networks

already had come out strongly against the proposal.

Thus, the big-time radio and TV interests have, within 48 hours, mounted a united front to combat the idea that evening network entertainment can achieve better quality and diversity if at least 50 per cent of it is owned by sponsors, independent producers or other sources outside the networks.

The NAB resolution was introduced without prior notice and adopted on a membership voice vote following a convention closing-day luncheon.

The organization declared it felt "there does not appear to be any legally sound jurisdictional basis" for the proposed FCC rule and that it "would not meet any public need but would arbitrarily interfere with licensee responsibility for programming and would adversely affect the amount, balance, and diversity of television network programming."

The CBS-TV stations went so far as to assert that "prompt and effective action in opposition to these proposals is of great importance to protect what the nation has come to regard as an essential ingredient of its daily life."

The network affiliates' move

reversed an attitude against against immediately joining in the call to arms against the FCC idea.

The Federal agency has invited public comments and may hold hearings on its staff-originated proposal, which is described as designed to curb the networks' now great economic domination of evening programming. The three national chains have a proprietary interest in well over 90 per cent of prime-time entertainment.

Crawford H. Greenewalt, board chairman of E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co. and national chairman of Radio Free Europe, told the broadcasters' luncheon he felt RFE had been so successful there should be a "Radio Free Asia" and possibly similar setups in still other parts of the world.

The industrialist said the privately-operated RFE, which is beamed at 80 million inhabitants of five Eastern European Communist satellite countries, is the "most popular" foreign broadcasting listened to behind the Iron Curtain, reaching "something over 50 per cent of the listening audience."

Greenewalt reported he had taped an interview with former President Eisenhower

which will be made available for broadcast in this country soon, as a fund-raising effort for RFE, in which Mr. Eisenhower discloses that Communist leaders several times during his Administration demanded that he "turn off Radio Free Europe." The former President replied, the speaker said, that it was a private organization not subject to government control.

The du Pont official said he felt the \$12 million needed to keep RFE going as "psychological warfare" was a small price to pay when "we're spending \$50 billion a year to keep our fists up, so to speak." RFE, he thought, is doing much to build an "informed public opinion" toward democracy in the countries it is penetrating.

Greenewalt's audience particularly savored his opening remarks about his TV viewing habits.

Confessing himself a "member in good standing of this intellectual wasteland over which you are said to preside," the manufacturer listed "The Flintstones," "Be-witched" and "The Rogues" as some of his favorite fare.

"The Greenewalt intellect is not of a very high caliber after quitting time," he confessed.